

SAS charter for England 2023



About us

NHS Employers is the employers' organisation for the NHS in England. We support workforce leaders and represent employers to develop a sustainable workforce and be the best employers they can be. We also manage the relationships with NHS trade unions on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

What the SAS charter is for

- It sets out both the rights and responsibilities of SAS doctors and their employers. Employers should show commitment to support and enable SAS doctors and dentists to realise their full clinical potential and to deliver the best patient care.
- It sets out the objectives and the support mechanism that NHS England Workforce, Training and Education (NHSEWTE) promotes and provides through individual local education training providers and its relationship with the integrated care boards (ICBs).
- It demonstrates a commitment to supporting and developing the role of the SAS doctor as a highly valued and vital part of the medical workforce in England.
- Trusts and Joint Local Negotiating Committees (JLNCs) are requested to commit to using the charter to help provide an optimum working environment for this valuable group of doctors.

The SAS charter has been created in partnership with the British Medical Association (BMA), NHS Employers, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and NHS England. This is revised version following the implementation of the 2021 contracts.

Role of a SAS doctor

As senior clinicians, SAS doctors bring experienced and specialist care, possessing individual and often highly specialised skills. As they gain experience, SAS doctors will be encouraged to develop the ability to work independently and to take on broader roles such as clinical and educational supervisors and as trained appraisers for their colleagues, including consultants.

It is the role of employers to provide SAS doctors with:

The **support and resources to develop** both personally and professionally.

A **working environment** that recognises the **SAS group's diversity** and their major contribution to patient care.

Ensuring that the role of the SAS doctor is fully **acknowledged and respected** by management, colleagues and patients.

An environment that **nurtures development** and **is free from** harassment, bullying and discrimination.

These principles are embedded in the [2021 SAS doctor contract](#).

Recommendations

Recommendations for the joint negotiating committees

Recognition for the SAS group

All joint local negotiating committees (JLNCs) should have membership that proportionally represents the medical workforce of the organisation.

This should consider different staff groups including SAS doctors to fully represent the local characteristics of the workforce.

Recommendations for minimum conditions requirements

Contract, job plan and appraisal

Every SAS doctor should have the following conditions as a minimum

- A contract of employment which incorporates national terms and conditions (TCS) based on the role of the SAS doctor.
- An appropriate mutually agreed job plan specific and relevant to their role within the service and individual specialised skills, which can only be changed by mutual agreement between the SAS doctor and their Clinical Manager, taking into consideration any recommendations following appraisal.
- An annual job plan review.
- Appropriate supporting professional activities (SPA) time for their role. The TCS for doctors on the SAS 2008 and 2021 contracts state there should be a minimum of one SPA for revalidation. Doctors taking up wider roles will need additional SPA time and should be a part of their job plan. SPA time underpins direct clinical care and may include amongst other things audit, CPD, local clinical governance activities, training, formal teaching, appraisal, job planning and research. As a doctor becomes more experienced and takes on a broader role the employer will need to keep all elements of the job plan under review.

- Employer support for pay progression through incremental points and thresholds.
- Adequate time, support, and resources to undertake appraisal, revalidation, and job planning, including access to individualised activity data.
- Hours of work which are compliant with relevant TCS and Working Time Regulations, unless opted out by mutual agreement.
- Balanced work/life commitments and scheduling recognising the split between daytime and out of hours work consistent with the relevant contractual safeguards.
- An annual appraisal following the principles set out by the General Medical Council (GMC) and a prospective personal development plan.
- Specialty doctors on the 2008 contract are able to transfer to the 2021 contract at any time they wish to.
- Equal access to the benefits and responsibilities of the NHS Constitution.
- Equitable annual leave entitlements and access to local policies including retire and return.
- The use of fixed-term and non-standard contracts should be avoided where possible and they should only be used where there is a clear requirement to do so. Where SAS doctors are employed on successive fixed-term contracts employers should consider whether there is scope for the doctor to be considered for a substantive appointment, noting that any doctor on a fixed-term contract for four or more years will automatically become a permanent employee, unless the employer can show there is a good business reason not to do so.

- If a doctor working on a non-standard contract mirrors that of a specialty doctor and meets the eligibility criteria for the specialty doctor contract (as set out in the 2021 TCS), and they are working in a post where there is recurring funding; they should be given the opportunity to apply through a competitive recruitment process for a substantive specialty doctor contract.
- Development, career progression and recognition within the SAS grade should be the norm rather than the exception which includes support for doctors who want to become specialists and those who want to undertake a Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR). The challenge is to translate the national SAS work to the local level so that it has a meaningful impact on the lived experiences of SAS doctors and dentists.

Support and recognition

Employers' responsibilities

- Appropriate access to resources such as office accommodation and technology to enable SAS doctors to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.
- Appropriate secretarial/admin support.
- Effective induction into their role and their location as advised in the NHS Employers [SAS induction checklist](#).
- All trusts in England should appoint an SAS advocate where possible.
- Capture of SAS contributions to patient care by hospital information systems, including the coding of patients and work activity under a SAS doctor's name where applicable, and the

provision of guidance on how to code appropriately and access to this data when required.

- Employers should ensure that where a SAS doctor is the clinician responsible for a patient's care this should be appropriately displayed. This will be in circumstances where senior SAS doctors have the expertise and ability to work autonomously and take responsibility for patients without consultant supervision within defined local governance arrangements.
- SAS doctors must be fully recognised, respected, and valued by employers and colleagues. There must be zero tolerance to bullying, harassment and victimisation of SAS doctors.

SAS doctors' responsibilities

- An SAS advocate's main role is to provide help and support and be a visible point of contact for SAS doctors in the organisation.
- An SAS advocate should also:
 - signpost SAS doctors to the relevant departments, colleagues, or information within the employing organisation as well as, where relevant, trade union representatives to provide support on their health and wellbeing including actions to address concerns raised regarding working relationships.
 - work with the trust and LNC to ensure a consistent approach to SAS doctors' health and wellbeing is adopted across the trust.
 - help to ensure the implementation of the SAS charter within their trust.

Personal development

Employers' responsibilities

- Specialty doctors should be supported to achieve progression to the Specialist grade if desired provided they meet the eligibility criteria and enter a competitive recruitment process.
- Support and access to Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR) and other credentialing activity and if successful with CESR, to be treated in the same way as any clinician who is on the GMC's Specialist Register.
- Access to appraisee training and appraiser training where applicable.
- SAS doctors should have the same access as their consultant colleagues to internal and external CPD activities including study leave time and funding.
- Employers should appoint and support a SAS tutor, with adequate time and resources, so that SAS doctors have access to support with clinical and non-clinical development.
- Employers should ensure that the SAS Tutor is updated on new SAS appointments to help the lead to establish contact with the appointee and provide help and support.
- Access to the mentorship process (where it exists) for professional and personal development needs as well as appropriate support and time to learn new skills.
- SAS doctors should have access to secondments and or sabbaticals, and this will be considered in line with an organisation's local policy.
- Sufficient breadth and depth of clinical work and relevant professional activities to enable the SAS doctors to achieve and maintain relevant competencies and develop as clinicians.

- The [SAS doctor development guide](#) describes actions that can be taken to ensure that best practice is applied in the development of all SAS doctors and how different groups can work together to ensure best practice is consistently applied.

Contribute to organisational development and decision making

Employers' responsibilities

- Support and encourage interested senior SAS doctors to contribute to departmental, directorate and wider corporate management roles. All SAS doctors who meet the essential person specification for management posts in their organisation should be eligible for consideration.
- Medical staff committee/hospital medical board (where it exists) membership. All SAS doctors should be invited to attend these and directorate meetings and encouraged to do so where other commitments permit.
- Senior SAS doctors should also be supported in taking up academic positions and given equitable additional NHS responsibility time in their job plan to facilitate this.
- Provide support and opportunities for SAS doctors to become clinical and educational supervisors and appraisers.
- Access (in the same way as other colleagues) to time off for external, civic and trade union duties.

Recruitment

Employers' responsibilities

- Recruitment and appointment processes should be fair, open, and effective.
- Job descriptions which define programmed activities should be available at the point of application.

SAS doctors' responsibilities

- SAS doctors should be involved in the recruitment of other SAS doctors.

Resources

Funding for SAS doctor development

- Employer based study leave with pay and expenses or time off in lieu with expenses within a maximum of thirty days in three years (see local study leave policy).
- Additional funding via the SAS professional development fund. This is additional to any defined study leave allocations within employing organisations. Accessed via associate deans or SAS tutors.

Links to additional information

More resources to support you

- Guidance for SAS doctors, all [employer resources](#) available on our website.
- [GMC guidance on appraisal and revalidation.](#)
- [BMA guidance on autonomy for SAS doctors](#)
- [GMC guidance on CESR qualification pathway](#)
- [Maximising the Potential: essential measures to support SAS doctors](#)
- [NHS Employers SAS induction checklist](#)
- [SAS - a viable career](#)
- [The role of the SAS tutor](#)
- [The role of the SAS advocate](#)
- [SAS contract reform 2021 FAQs](#)
- [SAS doctor development guide](#)
- [SAS UK job planning guidance](#)
- [SAS terms and conditions of service](#)
- [The NHS Constitution](#)

- [The state of medical education and practice in the UK. The workforce report 2023](#)

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